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Lucia A Keegan 02/08/2007 12:58:40 AM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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Text:

UNCLAS SENSITIVE PARIS 00480

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cxparis:

ACTION: SCI
INFO: UNESCO AMBO DCM AMB ECON MGT ESCI POL SCIO AGR
LABO ENGO ECSO

DISSEMINATION: SCIX
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: EMIN:TJWHITE
DRAFTED: ESTH:KMKATZER
CLEARED: ESTH:RWDRY; MGT: MBDEVER

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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4750
INFO RUEAUSA/DEPARTMENT OF HHS WASHDC
RUEHRC/DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC
RUEAHLC/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC
RUEHPC/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUCNMEU/EU INTEREST COLLECTIVE
RUEHZN/EST COLLECTIVE
RUEHMRE/AMCONSUL MARSEILLE 1515
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 000480

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR G/AIAG, OES/IHA, CA, CA/OCS, EUR/WE
HHS FOR INTERNATIONAL LSAWYER
USDA FOR ITP, CMP/DLP
USDA FOR FAS PASS FSIS AND APHIS
HOMELAND SECURITY FOR OIA
CDC FOR AVIAN INFLUENZA PLANNING CELL
USEU FOR ESTH TSMITHAM

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: KFLU FR AIAG

SUBJECT: FRANCE'S AVIAN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC PLANNING:
QUESTIONS FOR THE U.S.

REF: 06 PARIS 06376, 06 PARIS 6789

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¶1. (U) This is an action request. See para 8.

Paris Eager For Collaboration With U.S. Authorities

¶2. (U) Embassy ESTH officers recently met with Ministry of Health officials, who expressed interest in collaborating more intensively with the U.S. in two areas of pandemic influenza planning. Michel Augras, Director of Work for the Interministerial Delegate for Avian Influenza, and Emmanuel Jean, Chief of European and International Affairs at the Health Ministry, expressed interest in particular on U.S. views on how to prepare businesses to plan for a pandemic. French authorities have been working with the non-profit organization Safe America on this issue (NFI),

but consider more might be done on a government-to-government basis. Augras added that France and the U.S. are uniquely positioned to undertake this kind of effort. Secondly, France is keenly interested in the U.S. approach to ?social distancing? in the working population in the event of a pandemic. How do you organize the confinement for those who are not sick, he questioned. (NB. ESTH officer forwarded to the Health Ministry the materials about social distancing released February 1.)

¶3. (SBU) (Note also that French security authorities (Secretary General for National Defense ?SGDN?) had mentioned similar interests in cooperating further with the U.S. to visiting DOE Deputy Undersecretary for Counterterrorism, Steven Aoki, during his visit to Paris in October 2006, reported in 06 Paris 6789 (See Reftel B). Essentially, that message reported that France was examining economic consequences of a crisis, essentially determining weak links in the economic system, e.g., transportation or supply systems, food shortages, etc. ?Where do shortages come from in such (an AI-driven human disease) emergency,? asked Aoki?s French interlocutor. Learning more about the emergencies would permit authorities to adapt their emergency plans to provision against deep negative national economic repercussions in the event of a pandemic. The French security interlocutor indicated the GOF sought U.S. thinking/methodologies to help better assess weak points in the French economy in advance of any crisis. Embassy subsequently provided DHS pandemic planning contact information to SGDN in response to this request.)

More Questions...

¶4. (SBU) After the visits to Washington in early and in the summer of 2006, respectively, by Didier Hussein, France?s Interministerial Delegate for Avian Influenza and Minister of Health Xavier Bertrand, Embassy is unaware of subsequent high level contact between France and the U.S. to follow up several themes. Augras took the opportunity of ESTH Officers visit to ask if the U.S. had clarified the situations under which the U.S. might shut down air transportation in the context of human-to-human transmission of avian influenza. He also inquired as to what lessons the U.S. had learned from its AI simulations exercises.

Stockpile Numbers

¶5. (U) Regarding other AI information, Augras mentioned that France has not taken a decision as of yet as to whether to employ a pre-pandemic vaccine. There is considerable debate in Europe on this issue, he said, and for the present the GOF focus is on treatment vice vaccine prevention. According to the most recent numbers in the French press, Paris has stockpiled 70 million ?antiviral vaccines,? 81.5 million antibiotic treatments as contingency against a bioterrorist attack, 11.7 million antiviral treatments, 11.5 tons of oseltamivir in case of a AI pandemic, and 285 million filtration masks.

Updating The AI Plan

¶6. (U) Prime Minister de Villepin announced in early February after a Ministerial meeting that the GOF will release an updated National Plan to combat avian influenza in the coming days. According to Augras, the updates will include steps on how to maintain ?normal? economic activities as long as possible during a pandemic. De Villepin also announced that on 22 February the National Assembly will examine a proposed law to reinforce preventive measures against the avian flu. Specifically

the law would reinforce the resources of emergency services and hospital care, notably by putting in place a ?health reserve corps.?

New AI Ambassador

17. (U) Replacing Ambassador Coulont as the new Ambassador-at-large for Avian Influenza at the MFA is Charles M. Le Boeuf. Over his 30-year career, he has served in Africa, Israel, Morocco, and Spain. Most recently, he served in the Administration at MFA. He is a lawyer by training.

18. Comment and Action Request: France continues to maintain a high degree of preparedness for an eventual pandemic. It has undertaken any number of crisis management exercises at the national and local levels and has stockpiled medicines and personal protective equipment for use in an emergency. France is a leader in global vaccine development. France seeks to collaborate more closely with U.S. authorities, especially in sharing information about non-pharmaceutical measures and managing the economy in an emergency. French authorities would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these questions with U.S. pandemic planning experts on a bilateral basis. We think that given the thinking the French experts have given these questions that the U.S. might also benefit by an exchange. Accordingly, we wonder whether the U.S. might propose to the French bilateral consultations. Embassy would be pleased to convey U.S. interest in such talks to be held in either Washington or Paris to French health and emergency planning authorities.

STAPLETON